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\$2.7 MILLION IN GRANTS FOR AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION ANNOUNCED

KINGSTON – Governor Deval Patrick and Senate President Therese Murray today joined Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs Ian Bowles in announcing \$2.7 million in grants to help Massachusetts farmers compete in the marketplace.

The grants, announced following a tour of Bog Hollow Farm in Kingston led by owners Lydia and Barry Mathias, are the first to be awarded through the new Agricultural Innovation Center, which was created by the Legislature last year. With no office or staff, the Agricultural Innovation Center is a “virtual” center, which uses grants to build partnerships between the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources and industry support and trade organizations to develop agricultural enterprises that are economically viable and environmentally sustainable.

The largest of the grants – for \$1.5 million – goes to the Cape Cod Cranberry Growers Association, which will conduct a competitive process to provide up to \$10,000 per acre (out of a total cost of \$20,000 to \$30,000 per acre) for bog renovation. The additional production bog renovation makes possible will also support ancillary business development, for such products as dried cranberries and cranberry concentrate.

“It is fully appropriate that the cranberry industry would be the centerpiece of the Agricultural Innovation Center’s first grant year,” said Governor Patrick. “It is in our best interests to keep the Massachusetts cranberry industry alive and well and thriving in the global marketplace. The \$1.5 million provided by the Agricultural Innovation Center is the Commonwealth’s investment in making that happen.”

Senate President Murray, who was instrumental in passing the legislation that created the Agricultural Innovation Center, also stressed the need to help the region’s cranberry growers find new ways to compete.

“Every year, our cranberry farmers lose more ground to their counterparts up north because they haven’t been able to keep up with the advances that keep this industry competitive,” said Senate

President Murray. “These grants will help farmers begin to rehabilitate their bogs, which is expected to double their yield of cranberries and cut their water use in half.”

Agricultural Innovation Center grants, which require substantial matching funds from industry and other sources, have also been awarded to nine other projects across the state to help producers of Massachusetts crops improve their output and develop new business opportunities. In all, 22 proposals requesting more than \$5 million were submitted for consideration.

“Massachusetts farmers are facing challenges, and the solution is innovation,” said Secretary Bowles. “Thanks to the support of the Legislature, the Agricultural Innovation Center is here to help Massachusetts agriculture find new ways to compete.”

The projects funded in part by the Agricultural Innovation Center are:

- **Cranberry Bog Renovation-Innovation Program** (\$1.5 million) – Massachusetts cranberry growers selected through a competitive process initiated by Cape Cod Cranberry Growers Association will receive up to \$10,000 per acre toward the total cost of \$20,000 to \$30,000 per acre for cranberry bog renovation. Renovation will increase yield and provide new opportunities for ancillary business development (e.g. new dried cranberry plant, cranberry concentrate plant) and opportunities for reinvestment.
- **Adams Family Slaughterhouse** (\$300,000) – Funds will be put toward rebuilding a USDA-inspected slaughterhouse in Athol that burned to the ground in December. As one of only two facilities available to Massachusetts livestock operations, a restored Adams Family Slaughterhouse will help small to mid-sized livestock producers capitalize on the demand for locally produced meat.
- **Massachusetts Shellfish Aquaculture Innovation Consortium** (\$200,000) – This funding will strengthen a collaborative effort between Massachusetts shellfish growers, the Northeastern Massachusetts Aquaculture Center, and the Southeastern Massachusetts Aquaculture Center. Their efforts will promote visibility and acceptance of Massachusetts cultured shellfish, refine innovative hatchery and grow-out techniques, and provide educational and industry development opportunities.
- **Feed, Nutrient, and Other Alternatives for Dairy and Livestock Farms** (\$185,000) – This University of Massachusetts project will develop management strategies to achieve increased grain production and provide guidelines to optimize nutrients in feed, resulting in cost savings and greater efficiency in Massachusetts dairy and livestock production.
- **Integrating Pasture Management** (\$170,000) – Another UMass project will produce a range of tools and management practices that will contribute to improved economic and environmental conditions associated with pasture-raised livestock. Primary tasks include assessing forage species for varying soil conditions, increasing energy utilization from grazed and supplementary forages, and assessing feeding and watering systems.
- **Building Infrastructure for Massachusetts Farms** (\$117,000) – Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA), a nonprofit organization that links farmers and communities in western Massachusetts, will develop business development opportunities for bagged salad greens and Massachusetts-produced organic and conventional dairy products, capitalizing on rising consumer demand for fresh, local agricultural products.
- **Ethnic, Immigrant, and Refugee Farmer Business Training and Technical Assistance** (\$77,000) – Nuestras Raices, a nonprofit organization based in Holyoke, will engage the Commonwealth’s large and growing immigrant, refugee, and ethnic populations in producing and consuming Massachusetts farm products by providing farmer training, technical assistance and support; outreach and marketing to urban ethnic

populations, as well as food entrepreneurship training. These efforts will allow greater access to ethnic crops and expand the farm business capacity of targeted ethnic populations.

- **Sustainable Pollination Strategies** (\$71,500) – Working with the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources' chief apiary inspector, this University of Massachusetts project will work to address concerns related to reduced pollination capacity for cranberry production and examine alternatives that could be available in the event of catastrophic loss of traditional honey bee pollination.
- **Demonstration Small-Scale Farm Wine, Cider, and Juice Production Facility** (\$55,000) – This project will develop a small-scale winery and cider production facility at UMass–Amherst's Cold Spring Orchard Research and Education Center, to be used to develop innovative methods for wine, juice and cider production optimized for Massachusetts, produce technical and instructional publications for Massachusetts growers, and host workshops and demonstrations for establishment of prospective farm wineries. This project will capitalize on growing public interest in and opportunities for fruit, berry, and grape producers to diversify and add value to their agricultural products.
- **Mobile Poultry Processing Unit Training and Replication** (\$24,000) – Community Teamwork Inc., a Lowell-based nonprofit organization, will, in conjunction with the New Entry Sustainable Farming Project and New England Small Farm Institute, create a Mobile Poultry Processing Unit to meet current and growing demand from small- to mid-scale poultry producers for on-site processing.

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